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'Click It Or Ticket' Campaign starts May 24

The University of Wisconsin-Eau Claire Police will join thousands of law enforcement agencies for this year's "Click It or Ticket" seat belt campaign, one of the nation's most important highway safety efforts. From May 24 through June 6, the UW-Eau Claire Police will join officers statewide and nationwide to patrol for longer hours to reinforce one safety message — BUCKLE UP.

The annual campaign coincides with the first summer travel holiday. "Wisconsinites are anxious to resume their holiday traditions and that often includes a long weekend getaway or a day trip," said Sgt. Joel Field of the UW-Eau Claire Police. "With an increased number of cars flooding the roads for the upcoming Memorial Day holiday, it's vital that we get the word out about the importance of wearing a seat belt."

Currently, 89% of Wisconsin motorists wear safety belts. The 11% who fail to buckle up accounted for 43% of all the drivers and passengers killed in Wisconsin traffic crashes in 2020.

Wisconsin's primary seat belt law, in place since 2009, allows law enforcement to stop and cite motorists for failing to wear a seat belt. Drivers can also be cited for every unbuckled passenger in their vehicle. Penalties are higher for transporting unrestrained children. Failure to fasten a seat belt is among the most common traffic violations in Wisconsin, resulting in more than 27,000 traffic convictions last year.

According to the National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, in 2019, 55% of passenger vehicle occupants killed at night (6 p.m.-5:59 a.m.) were not wearing their seat belts. That is why one focus of the "Click It or Ticket" campaign is nighttime enforcement.

"We aren't handing out tickets for the thrill of it. Wearing a seat belt is not only the law, it can save your life," Sgt. Field said. "If you know a friend or a family member who does not buckle up when they drive, please ask them to consider changing their habits. Help us spread this lifesaving message before one more friend or family member is killed as a result of this senseless inaction. Seat belts save lives, and everyone — front seat and back, child and adult — needs to remember to buckle up every trip, no matter how long."

For more information on the "Click It or Ticket" mobilization, please visit www.nhtsa.gov/CIOT.